

Two weeks ago, the Food and Drug Administration reported an outbreak of an *e. coli* infection in raw spinach traced to Salinas Valley, California. Since then, 175 people in 25 states have fallen ill due to this infection, resulting in 92 hospitalizations and sadly one fatality. One LaSalle County, Illinois, woman is among the victims, experiencing a rare form of kidney failure from consuming contaminated spinach. The federal government is mobilizing its resources to contain this tragic outbreak. The Food and Drug Administration and Centers for Disease Control are working closely with state and municipal governments to recall questionable spinach supplies and issue widely distributed consumer warnings. Please review the following advice issued by the Centers for Disease Control:

The following is advice for consumers about this outbreak:

Currently, we are advising consumers to not eat any fresh spinach or salad blends containing spinach **grown** in the three counties in California implicated in the current *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreak -- Monterey County, San Benito County, and Santa Clara County. Fresh spinach **grown** outside these counties can be safely eaten. If consumers cannot verify that fresh spinach was grown in areas other than the California counties of Monterey, San Benito and Santa Clara, they are advised not to purchase or consume the fresh spinach. Frozen and canned spinach can be safely eaten.

E. coli O157:H7 in spinach can be killed by cooking at 160° Fahrenheit for 15 seconds. (Water boils at 212° Fahrenheit.) If spinach is cooked in a frying pan, and all parts do not reach 160° Fahrenheit, all bacteria may not be killed. If consumers choose to cook the spinach, they should not allow the raw spinach to contaminate other foods and food contact surfaces, and they should wash hands, utensils, and surfaces with hot, soapy water before and after handling the spinach.

Persons who develop diarrhea after consuming fresh spinach or salad blends containing fresh spinach are urged to visit their health care provider and ask that their stool specimen be tested for *E. coli* O157.

Persons who ate fresh spinach or salad blends and feel well do not need to see a health care provider.

For more information on the e. coli outbreak, see the following links:

<http://www.cdc.gov/foodborne/ecolispinach/>

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/spinacqa.html#what>